



Philippians 4:1-9 The Path To Peace

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro
www.calvarydcmetro.org

As we enter the final chapter, Paul is going to wrap up his letter, as he usually does, with some practical applications and some by-name taskings. It all boils down to four main admonitions: stand firm in the Lord when it comes to your relationships; when it comes to your emotions; when it comes to your thought life; and when it comes to your giving. We'll look at the first three this morning.

1 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

2 I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. **3** And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *are* in the Book of Life.

Two ladies – Euodia and Syntyche were having some conflict so Paul is urging them to resolve the conflict not by giving in to one another, but by giving in to Jesus; and he is urging his 'true companion,' (we don't know who that is) to help them as necessary.

Now, a few things need to be noted here:

1. These ladies were both Christians – their names are written in the Book of Life – the Bible makes several references to this as an accounting list of sorts wherein are written the names of all those who are saved by Jesus.
2. These ladies had both been active in ministry with Paul – they labored with him in the gospel

And yet, despite their apparent spiritual condition, they had a disagreement, a disagreement that was so severe news of it reached Paul.

The Bible doesn't pretend that everyone gets along just fine, even in the church. Paul himself had a bit of a blowup with Barnabas over his cousin Mark in Acts 15 and the two wound up parting ways.

It appears then that interpersonal conflict is a part of just about everyone's life. So, what do we do about it? How do we handle it?

Well, did you see what Paul said? He had heard about the issue. Surely everyone was hoping he'd pronounce a winner – who was right, who was wrong in the situation and what needed to be done.

But Paul doesn't even touch the issue. He never says a word about what they were arguing about or who might be right, he simply says, "I implore [you] to be of the same mind in the Lord." And that's the right answer, no matter the issue.

I've said before that almost all of our conflicts with other people – spouses, parents, employees, co-workers, teams that you have work with at school or at work – all your conflicts boil down to one of two issues: you disagree about what needs to be done, or how it needs to be done. It's the will and the way of party A versus the will and the way of party B. Flavor it however you want, but that's generally the substance.

So, when conflict occurs we generally turn to one of two options – force or compromise. We are forced into submission and acceptance, as by a boss who will fire us if we don't do it his way, a parent who will discipline, or just a good old-fashioned winner takes all fight over the issue. Or, we compromise – we both decide to accept something less than we originally wanted because doing so enables us to at least get something and to get it without going through the fight.

I want to tell you that as Christians, we shouldn't be seeking either of those alternatives. As a Christian, the best course of action is not to say, "What do I want, what do you want, and how are we going to make it all happen?" The place to start is by asking, "What does God want?" You can't be of "one mind" unless you have one head, and that head must be Christ.

I'll give you an example, and we'll take money, because that's a common problem causer.

You get a bonus – performance, Christmas, sign-on, whatever – you get a little dose of cash – how do you spend it? Does he get to put it toward the motorcycle? Does she get to go shopping and buy something for the kids? Who decides? Well, we could say, "whoever earned the bonus gets it." But, the Bible says the two have become one, so there really shouldn't be any – this is mine, that is yours – you both should have equal access to all the resources. So how do we spend it? Who wants what worst? No. The first thing you should do is say, "God, you are the one who gives us our daily bread – and You have suddenly provided us with more than we need. How can we use this in a way that is most pleasing to You?"

And you know what? You'll find some verses in the Bible that speak very clearly about the attitude we should have toward money, and how we can best use it. And after you have obeyed in those areas, as you continue to seek Him you might find that He says, "Go ahead and buy yourself a motorcycle, or go ahead and get that stuff you've been keeping your eye on." Or, He might say, I want you to hold on to it for a while and I'll show you something a little later. Or, "I want you to give X amount to so and so for such and such." My point is, that you should both be focused on giving God His way, not fixating on how you can get yours. Do this and you won't have conflict with one another.

This concept is absolutely critical for ALL of your relationships and I encourage you to think it over and over – almost all of our conflicts with other people stem from a disagreement about what we should do, or how we should do it, so we both need to come

under God's will for our lives. God's Word and His will need to provide the apex of unity in our relationships.

And what if one party in the conflict isn't saved? Well, the answer is the same – the situation shouldn't be my will or my desires versus theirs, it should be God's will and God's desires *in me*, versus them. And God will show you how to deal with the conflict. He'll strengthen you to accept the suffering – the Bible is full of examples – think of men like Daniel for instance. Bottom line – don't be an advocate for yourself, be an advocate for Jesus and that will resolve most of your problems. Not all of them, but most.

There will be some situations where you just don't agree and it's hard or impossible to determine what Jesus would have you do – in those cases you should still have the *attitude* of Christ even though you don't know His mind. You should disagree, agreeably.

There's a lot more we could say about this, but we need to move on.

[4](#) Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

[5](#) Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

[6](#) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; [7](#) and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, a subcomponent of the National Institute of Health, and the largest research organization in the world specializing in mental illness:

18% of Americans adults suffer from an anxiety disorder, with the average age of onset being 11 years old. That number does not include depressive disorders!

Anxiety disorders include: ¹

- Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)
- Panic disorder
- Social phobia.

And according to a recent article in the Guardian, a major British newspaper, it's not only an American problem.

“The use of anti-depressants and drugs to combat anxiety has risen [in England] by more than a quarter since the start of the financial crisis in 2007, a study has found.”

¹ http://www.nimh.nih.gov/statistics/1ANYANX_ADULT.shtml; and <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/mental-health-medications/what-medications-are-used-to-treat-anxiety-disorders.shtml> Accessed May 10, 2012

During the fiscal year spanning 2010-2011, “49.8 million items [were] prescribed - or about one for every man, woman and child in England.”

“Mental health charities believe job losses, loss of job security, and the increasingly difficult task of simply making ends meet at a time of price rises and static wages, have led to more and more people resorting to prescription drugs to help them cope with day-to-day life.”

“Overall, the NHS has spent over £1 billion (\$1.6B USD as of 10 May 2012) on anti-depressants and anti-anxiety drugs between April 2007 and March 2011.”²

Even the rich and famous are struggling - back in America again, many people know that Whitney Houston died from drowning affected by cocaine use and heart disease, but according to the coroner’s report “The toxicology tests found other drugs in her body, including marijuana, the anti-anxiety drug Xanax, the muscle relaxant Flexeril and the allergy medicine Benadryl, the report said. But these drugs “did not contribute to the death,” it said.”³

Or, how many of you saw this headline last week?

California medical examiner says painter Thomas Kinkade died from alcohol, Valium overdose – Associated Press, dated May 8, 2012.⁴

“The self-described ‘Painter of Light’ died on April 6 of an acute combination of ethanol and Diazepam intoxication, or in common terms, of alcohol and the tranquilizer marketed as Valium, the Santa Clara County Medical Examiner-Coroner’s Office said.”

Although his art was popular with common people, the art establishment regularly criticized him, and although his businesses brought in estimated \$100 million dollars a year, he had gone through a rough spell financially recently. So, he turned to alcohol about four or five years ago, and divorced his wife two years ago. (Remember, he would always paint an “N” somewhere in his paintings for her initial.) It was his live-in “companion” that found him dead in his bed a few weeks ago.

I think we’ve got a problem with anxiety and anti-anxiety drugs these days, don’t you?

And yet, according to the NIMH, the drugs aren’t even really going to cure you. They **might** help deal with the symptoms, but they’re not going to fix the problems.

You can read the following on their website describing the treatment of anxiety disorders:⁵

² <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/8931793/Anti-depressant-use-up-by-a-quarter-since-credit-crunch.html> Accessed May 10, 2012.

³ <http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/22/showbiz/whitney-houston-autopsy/index.html> Accessed May 10, 2012

⁴ http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/california-medical-examiner-says-painter-thomas-kinkade-died-from-alcohol-valium-overdose/2012/05/08/gIQADe8ZBU_story.html Accessed May 10, 2012

“Medication will not cure anxiety disorders, but it can keep them under control while the person receives psychotherapy. (Emphasis Added) Medication must be prescribed by physicians, usually psychiatrists, who can either offer psychotherapy themselves or work as a team with psychologists, social workers, or counselors who provide psychotherapy. The principal medications used for anxiety disorders are antidepressants, anti-anxiety drugs, and beta-blockers to control some of the physical symptoms. With proper treatment, many people with anxiety disorders can lead normal, fulfilling lives.”

And their bottom line: “Medication can be combined with psychotherapy for specific anxiety disorders, and this is the best treatment approach for many people.”

So, according the nation’s top Mental Health experts, if you’re struggling with anxiety, even if you get some drugs, you really need to see a counselor.

And I would agree.

You need an appointment with the Great Physician, the only counselor mentioned in Scripture, the one called “Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6)

Is 26:3 (ESV) You keep him in perfect peace
whose mind is stayed on you,
because he trusts in you.

4 Trust in the LORD forever,
for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.

Ps 55:22 Cast your burden on the LORD, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.

1 Peter 5:6-7 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care (NIV “anxiety”) upon Him, for He cares for you.

After all, what is anxiety? Well, to get a clinical diagnosis you would need to consult the DSM-IV definition, but I’ve got one that we can pretty easily understand: *Anxiety is the fear of not getting what you want.* It stems from the belief that you should be in control, but you aren’t and therefore you’re anxious about how things are going to turn out.

But the Bible says right here that we should not be anxious for anything. And that’s not because we’re ignorant of the fact or the problems, it’s not because we have some kind of magical faith, it’s because God says we should bring our problems to Him.

⁵ <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/anxiety-disorders/treatment-of-anxiety-disorders.shtml>
Accessed May 2012

So the proper response to anxiety, which we all feel a little of from time to time, is to know, or learn, God's Word – remind yourself of His promises about your issue and turn your anxieties into prayer requests.

If you're concerned about losing your job, pray: Father, I'm a little bit scared about how things might turn out, and I know that You tell me not to be afraid, so please, take my fear and help me to trust in you. I'm concerned that I might not have enough money, so Lord, please remind me that You are the ultimate source of my provision – I'm supposed to seek you for my daily bread. And Lord, I'm concerned about the stress this might cause in my family so I pray, would you please bring Your peace that passes all understanding.

If you're worried about something, anything – identify the issue, research the promises, and cling to them.

And then lather, rinse, repeat as often as necessary.

But what if what you're worried about actually comes? Are you able to handle it? Maybe not right now, but when it comes, you will. Remember that in the Lord's Prayer we are taught to ask for our "daily bread," that is, what is needed to get us through TODAY when we need more, God will give it, but not until then.

Corrie Ten Boom was a young Christian girl in Holland during WWII. Her family had been helping Jews escape from the Nazis and she was afraid of what might happen if they were caught. In her book, *The Hiding Place*, she writes about a conversation she had with her dad:

"Father sat down on the edge of the narrow bed. "Corrie," he began gently, "when you and I go to Amsterdam-when do I give you your ticket?"

I sniffed a few times, considering this.

"Why, just before we get on the train."

"Exactly. And our wise Father in heaven knows when we're going to need things, too. Don't run out ahead of Him, Corrie. When the time comes that some of us will have to die, you will look into your heart and find the strength you need-just in time."

Her family was eventually captured, and her dad, and her sister, did eventually die in concentration camps, though she lived and was eventually liberated when the Allies defeated the Nazis. She went on to write and speak about her experiences, including this one where she made the point that God doesn't give us dying grace until it's time to die.

If you need to deal with what you are so afraid of, God will give you the strength to do it then, though He might not give it to you now.

Anxiety wants you to worry about how things *might* turn out; God wants you to focus on what you should be doing right here and now.

Faith is the antidote to anxiety – trust in God today and rely on His sovereignty for tomorrow.

We move on to our final topic this morning:

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

This also relates to our dealing with anxiety, and the order is important – if you just think about what is true it will stop 90+% of the issues you’re anxious about.

But it also has to do with just keeping an eye on your thought life. What’s going through your mind? What are you feeding yourself?

Your mind is a sponge, it absorbs things and then when you’re squeezed, what you took in oozes right out into the rest of your life.

I’m not going to beat you up about the movies or shows you watch, the music you listen to, the books or magazines that you read, the conversations that you have, or the thoughts you think – I’m just going to point you to the Scriptures again and let them speak for themselves:

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

If you want more of Jesus to come out of your life, if you want more of Jesus to come out of your mouth, if you want more of Jesus to be on your mind, then take a hard look at what you’re taking in and how that might be clogging up the flow...

The answer to all of these issues – conflict in your relationships, anxiety in your life, or misdirected thoughts – the answer for all of them is to put Christ at the center. As Paul said in verse one, “stand fast in the Lord, beloved.”

Maybe you need to do that for the first time today – maybe you need to ask Jesus to take His rightful place at the center of your life, or maybe you need to ask Him back there again. Do today. Do it right now. And if you need or want to talk with me or someone else about it, we’ll be in the back after the service. But don’t walk out of here this morning without taking the time to recalibrate your navigation system – put Jesus at the center of all you are and all you do, and let Him be your Savior, your counselor, your comforter and your guide.